

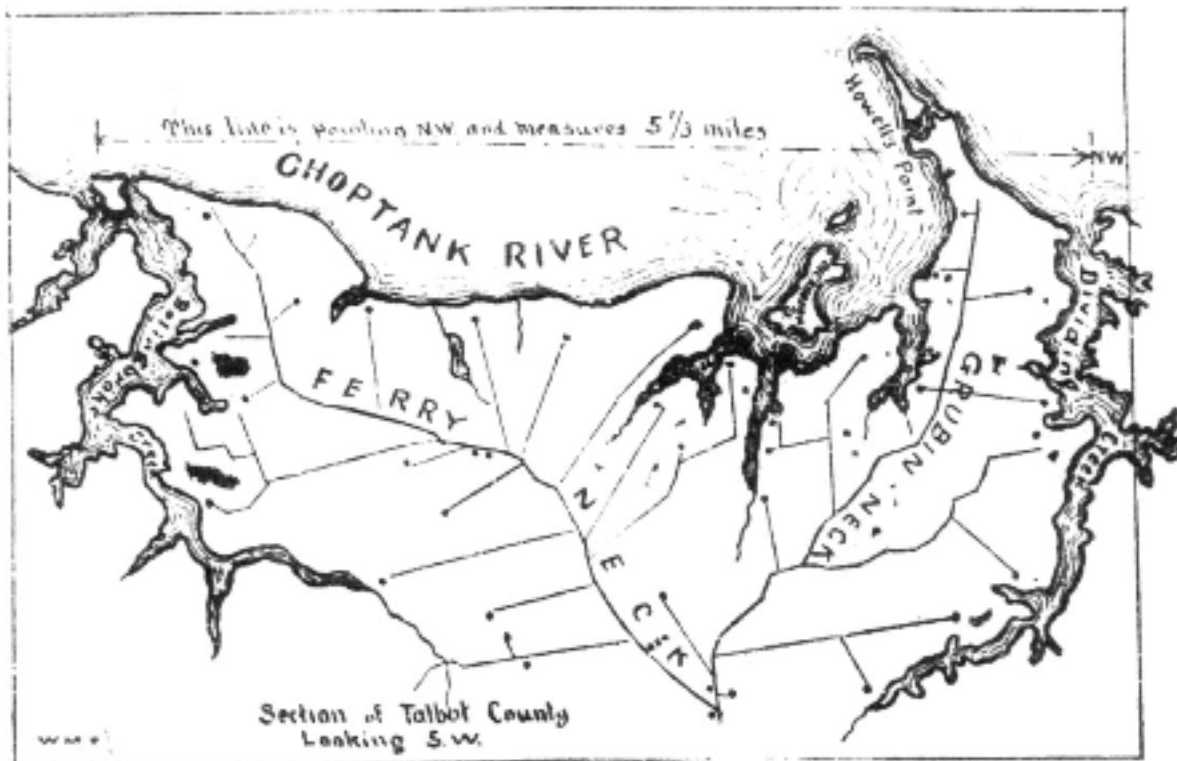
CAMBRIDGE FERRY NECK, TRAPPE, MD.
by Wilson M. Tyler
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“CAMBRIDGE “FERRY NECK” IS PICTURESQUE
Early Residents of This Section Are Probably Responsible For Giving The
Town of Trappe its Name--A Favored Spot

A snap-shot of Ferry Neck, taken at any time, by any person, would reveal some interesting phase, unique in itself. The snap-shot herewith presented does not pretend to be an exhaustless expose of this delightful section of Talbot. The Neck properly begins with the second road to the left after one passes entirely through that delightful little residential hamlet of Trappe,-the town which has just adorned its sky-line with a towering tank for water distribution. Once in the Neck, one is actually “swallowed” to the end of the drive. This drive is wooded almost completely. Both sides of the main road are pictured with gentle curves and, at present time, autumnal foliage. Here and there a few acres of rejuvenated alfalfa, since the rains, reveal a carpet of verdant green. Here is where the color of spring-time is seen in contrast to autumn hues. The stately shocks of corn stand in martial order, like rows of Indian wigwams, encamped under “chalk-line” discipline. Pulverized acres of ground, combed with the drill, promise returns of wheat at the next harvest.

But why “Ferry Neck?” Because at the terminal, at one time, was kept a “ferry” between that point and Cambridge, three miles distant, across the waters of the broad Choptank. The farm is still known as Ferry Farm, a tract of some 240 acres in the possession of the heirs of Alex Bowdle, from pre-bellum days, and operated by the grand-son, Mr. Bowdle Highley, whose residence is in Trappe. Here is where are spent many winter hours by those of sporting inclination when wild duck and other waterfowl offer inducement. The duck-blind and hunter’s shack, with all the accouterments give Ferry Farm a special attraction. No stretch of farm land in the county offers more beautiful fields of rolling surface,- rather unexpected feature being, as it is, so contiguous with the shore-line. The once prominent hip-roofed mansion has seen better days. Just at this point could be opened up an unwritten history by some facile writer which would be strikingly entertaining, with a little constructive imagination thrown in to fill in the crevices. Not the crevices of the antique building but the crevices of the story. Perhaps, and with much probability, there would have been no village known as “Trappe” had it not been for Ferry Inn; for that more pretentious name adorned at one time the old house there now exposed to the blasts of winter and the suns of summer.

Introducing the reader to the house: Enter please, the bare hallway, with front entrance facing the river, the rear door opening up a vista of fertile fields and a hundred sheep browsing in the meadow. To the right and left are the usual rooms,-one designated the parlor and another the living room communicating with kitchen. The double parlor, with a massive hinged door to close as a partition, is made tenable by a V-shaped, double fireplace, each one opening in its respective room. The flat side of the triangular chimney on the outside is concealed by the weather-boarding. The brick-work is substantial and would seem to endure for all time. The bricks, of hard red texture, are of clumsy shape, about twice the size of the common brick, almost as thick as they are wide. “They were never made in this country,” says tradition. In the rooms above, the same fireplace design is continued. Enough wood could have been consumed by the heating of one small room to supply the heat for a large modern dwelling, with cellar furnace. Enter the cellar: Over head the floor joist are white oak unsawed logs, with the bark still on. The flat side hewn to accommodate the flooring. The cellar is dry as dust from a Mexican catacomb and the timbers with frequent intervals support the flooring above. The walnut newelpost from the hall stairway projects through the oaken floor into the cellar and is there heavily keyed through a mortised hole. No spur nails deceive the building of this house. The newelpost would break off before it could be wrenched from the floor at the floor of the stairs. The Inn accommodated those who were delayed in the crossing of the Choptank, and it may rightfully be conceded that in those days “many a wassail bout wore the long winter out.” This was the terminal of that trail which found its way through the wooded Neck to the water’s edge, where a short cut could be made by those seeking the other side, and for the mail carried to Dorchester from the north.



Here it was that the young woman, disillusioned by anticipated connubial companionship, sat nightly before the fire, lonely and retrospective, after the kiddies had been relegated to their couches. Tradition gives her the name of Donoho, a corruption of Don't-Know-Who. Her husband had not yet returned from "that trap." At this time there was, at the cross-roads at the head of the four necks, (Island Creek, Grubin, Ferry and Bolingbroke) a store and general rendezvous for the loafing, gambling gentry. Some say it stood on the site of Simpson's store in Trappe. However, it stood somewhere and was responsible for the name which Mrs. Donoho gave. Other neglected women caught the ill-fated cognomen which seemed so fitting, and "That Trap" came into common use. Later, when it came time to recognize the place by a worthwhile name, it was written as now spelled. Still later when it was sought by legislators from that section to get an appropriation for deepening the channel of Dividing Creek, it was thought expedient to designate the creek by the better-sounding name of La Trappe River. Such a name was borrowed from the French, but the English meaning, given by a neglected woman, is said to be the true etymology of the name, with a French flavor. This does in no way detract from the dignity of Trappe. Other historic names have oftentimes a very undignified origin.

Not far from Ferry Farm is "Porpoise" farm. Here is another trap. This time for porpoises and not for men. The small lake-like body of water has an outlet which in high tide admits large fish and at low tide leaves them trapped. In this way, the farm has won its name. On it is one of the handsomest black walnut trees to be seen anywhere. It is more than six feet through. Enough money has not yet been laid down to buy it, and it is hoped the day is far distant when such a magnificent tree will succumb to commercial aggrandizement.

In 1867 John F. Baggs came to Easton as Clerk of the Court, leaving his farm in Ferry Neck. It is nicely situated on the upper waters of Bolingbroke Creek, belonging to R. J. Dawson, with Junior residing there. Besides its territorial value, this spot was once made more famous than at present by the establishment thereon of a boarding school. The home of this school was destroyed by fire some fifty years ago. It attracted young men from a distance who boarded with the family of the principal, a man who

had come all the way from Texas, and after some more or less discordant years vanished further by returning to Texas, or disappearing from sight in another direction. His memory leaves a pleasant flavor in the minds of some who can still recall him. He polished the young men on the three R's and gave them copious drougths of history and latin. He had a sort of cow-punching gentility about him which attracted the youth. Among these can be mentioned the familiar names in Caroline County of Tom Ford, Will Thawley and Dick Jarrel. (Our late lamented Easton merchant, J. R. Jarrel); also such home names as J. R. Dawson, Stephen E. Merrick, Dr. Samuel Merrick, now of Baltimore, the late William S. Merrick, of Trappe, Charles Bowdle, "Sheriff" Will Dukes, Fred Baggs, Will Baggs and others. Preston had thrilling stories to tell the boys, along with his latin and upper mathematics in the rule of three. He throttled a blood hound once which grabbed at his throat and, David-like, with the lion, Preston rammed his hand into the dog's mouth to the root of the tongue, this saving his own throat from the fangs which may have destroyed his life. Preston had a colored man, trusty, who gloried in classical English. Nothing so charmed his linguistic ear as a link of high-sounding words. He had one set phrase he used with the boys as they dismounted from the horses on coming to school. To hear him reel it off, one would say "Good morning, Henry, how are you this morning? The stereotyped answer would come back: "Putty fair state of animation,- no right to infringe on the peruse of my affections-how does your corporality dis mawning, Sir?"

The "Anchorage" another time honored home, owned now by Mrs. Margaret Kirby and tenanted by John H. Lyons, was once part of the landed estate of Alexander Bowdle. Eighty-five years ago it was owned by the widow of John Jenkins who in 1842 married Solomon Mullikin, grandfather of the present well-known Clayton Mullikin. At this wedding one sole witness survives the venerable Robert T. Mullikin, of Trappe, who, by the way, was clerk to the first board of commissioners, in that town, after its incorporation, and he served faithfully for the then tempting salary of ten dollars per year.

It would not be fair to Ferry Neck to omit mention of one of the most popular resorts within its borders the "Ridley" farm owned by E. J. Kirby, on which was built a steamboat wharf, now obsolete, but attractive to bathers and fishing parties. No water site in Talbot is better known. The grounds for many years have accommodated large gatherings of picnickers. The farm, well tilled, is made to produce all that is required by modern methods.

The heirs of Samuel Thomas, who was the nephew of the late J. O. Dickinson, own the "Craig" farm. This farm produced over nine thousand baskets of tomatoes this year with a return of \$2,000. It is tenanted by Ormond Harrison, of whom the neighbors speak in highest terms as a man strictly attentive to his business and can be found, usually, on his farm. He permits "no grass to grow" where it should not, and the siren song of the circus calliope has no lures for him.

If one would like to quaff a drink from the old oaken bucket, dripping from a deep well, visit the "Tommy Chaplain" farm at the head of Reeds Creek, that southern prong, seen on the map, entering Ferry Neck from Dickinson Bay. Here is a brick mansion. The farm is tenanted by Edward Bryan, and belonged to the J. Frank Stevens estate. Near by is the Dr. S. E. Chaplain farm, more recently sold by Miss Maud Chaplain to J. Franklin Baker, of baseball fame. J. F. Baker owns the rest of the land, contiguous with the little bay in that part of Ferry Neck. To say the waters of the Choptank on the Baker farms are not prolific with wild duck, in season, would be inconsistent with the results. It is said when the sure "batting-eye" of Franklin sights down the barrel of his gun at a flying duck that duck precipitates. Mr. Baker resides in his modern built home at Trappe. The farm is tenanted by his brother, Norman.

Other farms in the Neck, which should be more fully mentioned than space here will permit, are the "Stevens farm", owned by R. J. Dawson; occupied by his son, R. N. Dawson; the farm owned by the Baltimore lawyer, J. U. Dennis and run by Dudley Baynard; the "Broad Oak" and "Briar Patch" farms owned by Davis C. Kirby of Trappe; the "Martin Farm" owned by E. J. Kirby of Ridley; the "George L. Jenkins" farm, occupied by his son Seymour, and the "Beaver Dam" and "Peter Mullikin" farms owned by Alexander Bowdle Highley.

Ferry Neck is worthy of better treatment than is given here by a snap-shot of word-picture. Those who have furnished much of the information are gratefully asked to be charitable. They are Messrs. R. T. Mullikin, James Parrott, Bowdle Highley and Stephen E. Merrick."

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